

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 02043 120932Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 EUR-12 SSM-03 ACDA-12 CIAE-00
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R 120822Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7588
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
USLO RIYADH
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBBBASSY TRIPOLI
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
SECDEF WASHDC
DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 2043

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PEPR, PLO, SY
SUBJECT: SYRIANS OBJECT TO PLO ATTENDANCE AT AL FONMIN CONFERENCE

1. REGULAR PALESTINIAN SOURCE TOLD POLOFF THAT DISCUSSION AT DAMASCUS PLO HEADQUARTERS ON APRIL 9 CENTERED AROUND MEETINGS ARAFAT HELD WITH KHADDAM AND ASSAD ON APRIL 8.
2. COMMENTING ON RECENT MEETINGS ARAFAT HELD WITH KHADDAM AND ASSAD, SEVERAL PLO OFFICIALS INCLUDING DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL OF PLO'S SYRIAN OFFICE SAMIH SHAHAD CLAIMED THAT KHADDAM HAD POINTEDLY CONFRONTED ARAFAT WITH SAID KAMAL'S
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RECENT ATTENDANCE AT THE ARAB LEAGUE FOREIGN MINISTERS' CONFERENCE IN CAIRO. NOTING THAT HIS ATTENDANCE RAN COUNTER TO DECISIONS OF THE "STEADFASTNESS FRONT," KHADDAM ASKED ARAFAT IF HE STILL ADHERED TO THE DECISIONS OF THE GROUP. ARAFAT PREDICTABLY DENIED TO KHADDAM THAT KAMAL'S ATTENDANCE HAD BEEN AUTHORIZED; A CLAIM NO ONE AT THE PLO HEADQUARTERS BELIEVED.

3. A SYRIAN BUSINESSMAN WHO OCCASIONALLY SEES HANI AL-HASAN AND AHMAD JIBRIL TOLD US THAT JIBRIL SEES UN FORCE AND PARTICULARLY PARTICIPATION OF FRENCH TROOPS AS DANGEROUS TO THE GUERRILLA PRESENCE IN LEBANON. JIBRIL SAID THAT CHAMOUN WOULD NOW TRY TO REALIZE HIS GOAL OF INTERNATIONALIZING LEBANON'S CONFLICT BY GETTING FRENCH TROOPS TO COME TO BEIRUT AND ENGINEERING CLASHES BETWEEN THEM AND THE PALESTINIANS.

4. THE BUSINESSMAN, WHO CLOSELY FOLLOWS PALESTINIAN AFFAIRS, BELIEVED IT WAS VERY POSSIBLE THAT SYRIA WOULD EVENTUALLY MOVE TO THE LITANI AND OPINED THAT FATAH MIGHT ACQUIESCE IN THIS, ALLOWING THE REJECTIONIST FACTIONS TO CONFRONT THE SYRIANS BY THEMSELVES. SUCH A MOVE, HE FELT, WOULD SIGNAL THE END OF PLO INDEPENDENCE AND CONSUMMATE THE PROCESS STARTED IN JORDAN IN SEPTEMBER 1970 AND FURTHERED BY SYRIA'S JUNE 1976 ENTRY INTO LEBANON. SOURCE FELT THAT ISRAEL'S SWEEP UP TO THE LITANI HAD BROUGHT THE PROCESS CLOSER TO ITS LOGICAL CONCLUSION. HE CLAIMED THAT ASSAD'S MEETING WITH ARAFAT WAS INTENDED TO DEFLECT CRITICISM IN DAMASCUS THAT ASSAD HAD PROVED "A TRAITOR" TO THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE.

4. COMMENT: WHILE THERE IS A GREAT DEAL OF LOGIC IN THIS BUSINESSMAN'S ANALYSIS, WE ARE SOMEWHAT SKEPTICAL THAT ARAFAT WOULD SO EASILY ACQUIESCE IN A
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MOVE WHICH WOULD
CLEARLY GIVE SYRIA VIRTUAL CONTROL OVER PALESTINIAN MILITARY
OPERATIONS.
PELLETREAU

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